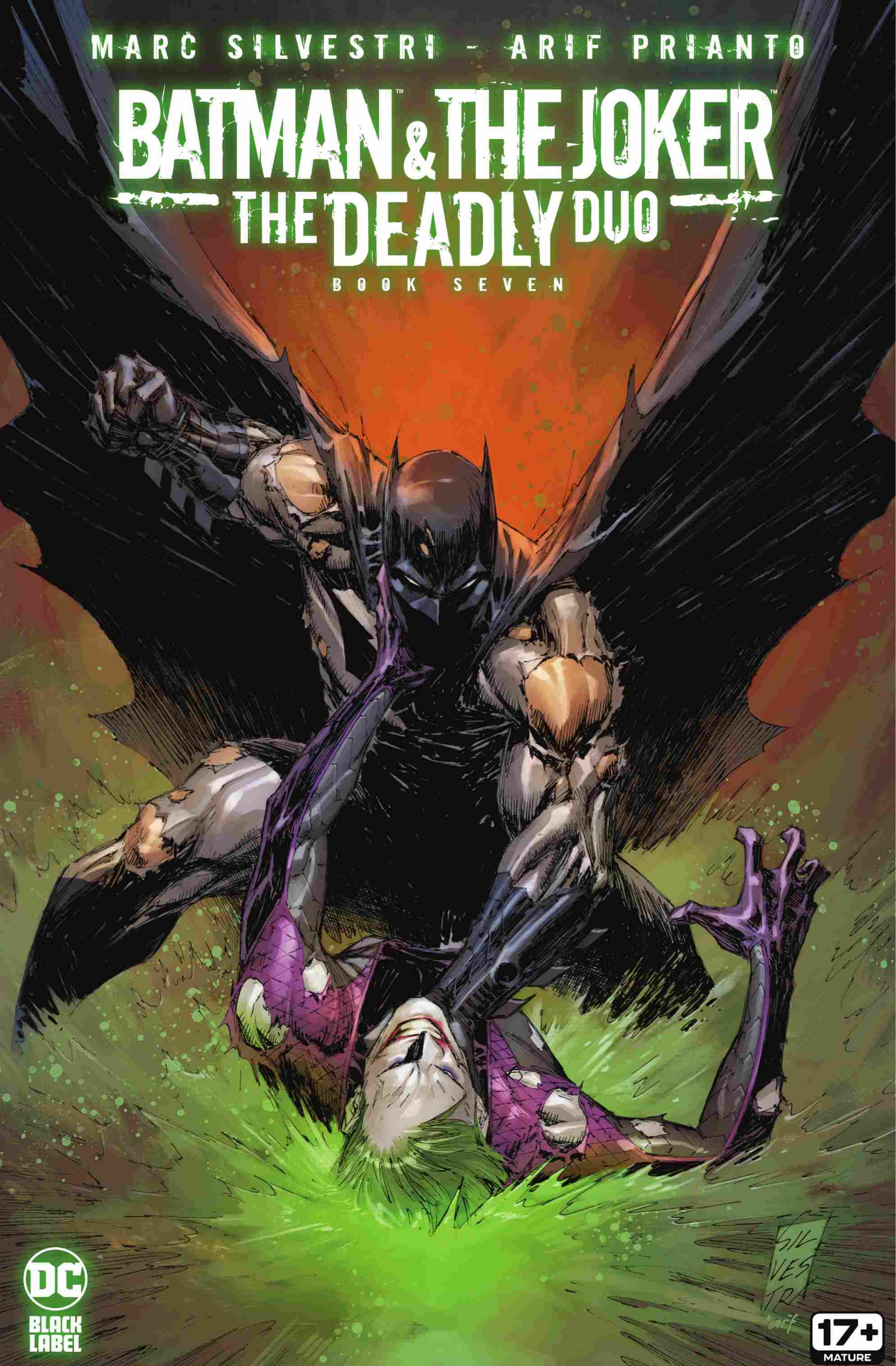
MARC SILVESTRI - ARIF PRIANTO

# BATMAN™ & THE JOKER™

## THE DEADLY DUO

BOOK SEVEN




DC BLACK LABEL

17+ MATURE

DAWN OF DC

A NEW ONGOING SERIES MAY

# GREEN LANTERN #1

## HAL JORDAN IS BACK ON EARTH AND READY FOR ACTION!

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Written by
**JEREMY ADAMS**

Art by
**XERMÁNICO**

Also featuring
JOHN STEWART: HOMECOMING by
**PHILLIP KENNEDY JOHNSON**
and **MONTOS**

**FORGING THE FUTURE ONE HERO AT A TIME**

STORY AND ART

# MARC SILVESTRI

COLORS

# ARIF PRIANTO

LETTERS

# TROY PETERI

SPECIAL THANKS TO

# MATT HAWKINS

SPECIAL THANKS TO

# BRIDGET SILVESTRI

HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA
HA

I HAVE WHAT *THE JOKER* WANTS AND USE IT AS *BAIT* TO GET HIM AWAY FROM *JIM GORDON.*

OH, BATS...

...I WAS STARTING TO WORRY THIS WHOLE *TEAM-UP* JOKE WASN'T GONNA HAVE A *PUNCHLINE!*

I TEAMED UP WITH THE JOKER FOR *JIM*...

...BUT I BREAK HIS *JAW* FOR *ME.*

KAK

I FELT THAT.

YA KNOW, BATS, IT WAS *FUN* WHILE IT LASTED...

...BUT I'M THINKIN' THIS *DEADLY DUO* GAG HAS PLAYED ITSELF OUT, SO--

WHAK

KRAK

DOOF!

SPLASH

YOU OKAY DOWN THERE, PERSON I'M NOT CURRENTLY SPEAKIN' TO?

NEVER =GAKK= BETTER, HONEY-BEE!

IN FACT...

...I'M ROCKIN'! HA!

CRNCH

THIS IS MORE LIKE IT, EH, BATS? JUST LIKE OLD TIMES!

BUMMER ABOUT COMMISSIONER NINE FINGERS, BUT HEY, IT'S ALL BEEN FOR A GOOD CAUSE...

KRAK

...MINE!

JOKER...

...SHUT UP.

ALL THE SUFFERING HE'S CAUSED...

YOU GUKKE CALL THAT WEAK SAUCE A PUNCH?

...ALL THE DEATH...

WHAT'S THE MATTER, AFRAID OF A LITTLE BLOOD? C'MON, HIT ME!

SHUT UP.

KEEP TRYIN', GRANNY, I GOT PLENTY MORE TEETH!

SHUT UP!

...I CAN END IT ALL...

WAK!

...RIGHT HERE.

GRRRRRR!

HSSSSSSSS!

I HAVE TO SAY, BATMAN...

I DISAGREE. YOU WERE FREE TO **ACCEPT** MY VISION OF **GOTHAM,** YOU **CHOSE** NOT TO...VIOLENTLY. IN FACT, I FIND YOUR ABILITY TO **JUSTIFY** THE VIOLENCE AND DEATH THAT SURROUNDS YOU **ASTONISHING.**

DENY IT ALL YOU WANT, BUT THE PEOPLE **KILLED** IN THE CROSSFIRE OF YOUR ACTIONS ARE **YOUR** RESPONSIBILITY.

TO HIS CREDIT, **THE JOKER** DOESN'T DENY WHAT HE IS BY CLINGING TO SOME GRANDIOSE MORAL HIGH GROUND. HE **OWNS** THE TITLE OF IRREDEEMABLE **PSYCHOTIC.**

...FOR SOMEONE CLAIMING TO **NEVER KILL,** A LOT OF PEOPLE SEEM TO **DIE** AROUND YOU--

--INCLUDING MY **CHILDREN.**

YOUR "CHILDREN" WERE NEVER REALLY **ALIVE** TO BEGIN WITH.

AND JOKER, YOU **WILL** BE PUNISHED FOR YOUR **BETRAYAL.**

SPEAKING OF **PSYCHOTICS,** WHERE'S **HARLEY?**

UP HERE, CORPSE BRIDE!

BLAM BLAM BLAM

SPLAT

WAHOO!

YIPPEE-KI-YAY, MOTHERF--

--OW.

SPLASHHH!

THAT WAS A LITTLE, UM...CLOSE THERE, MONKEY BUG!

I MISSED.

HARLEY'S DISTRACTION BUYS US A FEW SECONDS, BUT EVEN IN THEIR ***WEAKENED STATE,*** THESE CREATURES ARE ***OVERWHELMING*** US.

I PLAY MY LAST CARD.

BLIP

BOOM

BOOM BOOM BOOM

WE'RE DEEP WITHIN AN ABANDONED SUBWAY SYSTEM ***BENEATH*** GOTHAM'S ***EAST RIVER,*** A PROJECT THAT WAS SHUT DOWN YEARS AGO BECAUSE OF DESIGN FLAWS ENGINEERS FEARED COULD LEAD TO A MASSIVE ***STRUCTURAL COLLAPSE.***

I STUDIED THE ORIGINAL CONSTRUCTION PLANS AND PLOTTED OUT THE AREAS THAT WERE MOST VULNERABLE TO ***FAILURE.***

INSIDE THE ***BACKPACK*** THE JOKER WAS WEARING WERE ***EXPLOSIVE CHARGES*** THAT COULD BE PLANTED AND REMOTELY DETONATED.

MY ***NUCLEAR OPTION*** IF THINGS WENT SOUTH...

...WHICH THEY HAVE.

ARMED

WE NEED TO GET TO HIGHER GROUND. ***NOW.***

WHAT THE HECK? I JUST GOT DOWN HERE AND--

--OH SHI--

MOMENTS AGO I ALMOST **CROSSED A LINE** WITH THE JOKER...A LINE I SWORE I WOULD **NEVER** CROSS...

...ONE I CAN **NEVER** RETURN FROM.

THAT'S **NOT** WHO I AM...

...I'M **NOT** HIM.

WE HAVE ONLY SECONDS BEFORE THE TUNNEL FILLS WITH WATER...

JOKER! TAKE MY HAND!

PULL MY **FINGER!**

**JOKER! HARLEY!**

I LOSE THEM IN THE RUSH OF WATER.

WE'RE OVER *HERE!*

THERE'S NO MORE ROOM ON THE *DOOR, JACK!* BEAT IT!

PUNT

THE WALLS ARE *COLLAPSING* AROUND US. I HAVE TO GET TO THEM QUICKLY.

HANG ON, I'LL COME TO YOU--

AMANDA'S FINGERS TEAR INTO MY *SKIN* AS SHE TRIES TO DRAG ME UNDER.

NO...

...YOU'RE STAYING WITH ME.

KRK KK

KHOOM

WELL, THAT WAS NEAT...NOW WHAT?

WE WAIT.

I HATE TO BREAK IT TO YA, BUT UNLESS YOUR **OTHER SUPER-FRIEND** IS **AQUAMAN,** WE'RE KINDA SCREWED.

JUST WAIT.

AH! **THERE'S** MY BOY!

**JOKER,** TAKE MY HAND. I'LL PULL YOU BOTH OVER!

NO CAN DO, BATS.

DON'T BE A **FOOL.**

SORRY, PARTNER...

...BUT MY HANDS ARE **FULL.**

AWW CRA--

-AAAAAAAAAD!

FWOOOOSH

THE ROCK WALL GIVES WAY...NOTHING TO GRAB ON TO.

I'VE GOT YOU!

JIM!

THE WATER'S RISING FAST...

...CAN YOU WALK?

I CAN *RUN* IF WE NEED TO.

GOOD...

"...WE NEED TO."

FWOOSH

AMANDA SIMMS SOUGHT TO DESTROY GOTHAM AND REBUILD IT IN HER IMAGE.

I WATCH THE RUINS OF WHERE SHE DIED DISAPPEAR INTO THE SOIL, AS IF THE CITY ITSELF WAS ENACTING ITS REVENGE.

HE SURVIVED, DIDN'T HE?

WE SHOULD ASSUME SO, YES. AND IF HE DID, HE'S MORE DANGEROUS NOW THAN EVER.

WONDERFUL. I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU'LL TELL ME WHY.

NOT AT THE MOMENT, NO.

I LET **BARBARA** KNOW THAT HER FATHER IS OKAY AND ARRANGE FOR HIM TO BE **GUARDED** AT THE HOSPITAL...

...IF THE JOKER IS ALIVE, **NO ONE** IS SAFE.

THE POLICE RADIO CRACKLES IN MY EARPIECE.

*ALL UNITS...*

*...ROBBERY IN PROGRESS, FIRST GOTHAM BANK. SUSPECTS ARE **ARMED** AND CONSIDERED **EXTREMELY DANGEROUS.***

HE'S ALIVE.

THEY WERE IN AND OUT PRETTY QUICK.

TAKES A FAIR AMOUNT OF **BOOM** TO BLOW A HOLE IN A **BANK VAULT.** SHATTERED WINDOWS THREE BLOCKS AWAY...

FIRST GOTHAM BANK

...SEEMS LIKE A LOTTA FUSS FOR A **SAFE DEPOSIT BOX.**

HE GOT WHAT HE WANTED.

ALFRED.

IT'S GOOD TO HEAR YOUR VOICE, SIR--

INITIATE THE **AEGIS PROTOCOL.**

RIGHT AWAY, SIR...

...WHAT'S HAPPENED?

**THE JOKER.**

THE TASKS AT THE FACTORY AND ON THE TRAIN, THE CREATURES WE FOUGHT ON THE ROOFTOPS, THE **TEAM-UP...NONE** OF IT WAS MEANT FOR **HIM...**

THEY WANT A GOTHAM WITH NO **NEED** FOR PEOPLE LIKE **YOU.**

"...IT WAS ALL MEANT FOR **ME.**"

LET ME TELL YOU WHY...

...IN A WAY, THEY FEAR YOU **MORE,** BECAUSE UNLIKE **HIM, YOU** HIDE BEHIND A **MASK.** WHO YOU ARE IS YOUR BIGGEST **LIE,** AND THE EXPOSING OF THAT LIE, YOUR GREATEST **FEAR.**

IN THE EYES OF **GOTHAM,** YOU ARE NO DIFFERENT FROM **THE JOKER...**

TELL ME, WHAT IS THE **ONE** THING **THE JOKER** WOULD RISK **EVERYTHING** FOR...

...MR. WAYNE?

THE JOKER IS **ALIVE,** ALFRED...

...AND HE KNOWS WHO I AM.

THE ***AEGIS PROTOCOL*** WAS CREATED AS A FAIL-SAFE IN THE EVENT ANY OF ***BATMAN'S*** ENEMIES LEARNED HE WAS ***BRUCE WAYNE.***

WAYNE

IN THAT SCENARIO, ANY INDIVIDUAL ASSOCIATED WITH WAYNE, EITHER PERSONALLY OR PROFESSIONALLY, WOULD BECOME A POTENTIAL TARGET AND THEIR LIVES PUT AT RISK. THE PROTOCOL IS DESIGNED TO ***PROTECT*** THEM.

IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN A COVER STORY FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC, AN ELABORATE AND CAREFULLY CONTROLLED NARRATIVE INVOLVING A TERRORIST THREAT AGAINST ***WAYNE ENTERPRISES*** IS IMMEDIATELY TRIGGERED.

THE ***PLANTED*** EVIDENCE AND "EYEWITNESS" ACCOUNTS ENSURE THE PARTICIPATION OF THE ***MEDIA*** AS WELL AS THE INVOLVEMENT OF LOCAL AND FEDERAL ***LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES.***

APARO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

THE PROTOCOL HAS NEVER BEEN USED AND NO ONE OUTSIDE MY INNER CIRCLE KNOWS IT EXISTS.

THOUSANDS ARE HAVING THEIR LIVES INTERRUPTED FOR THEIR OWN SAFETY, BUT NONE OF THEM KNOW THE ***TRUTH*** AS TO WHY.

YOUR TEA, SIR.

THANK YOU, ALFRED.

***THE PROTOCOL*** IS RUNNING SMOOTHLY AND THERE HAVE BEEN NO THREATS OF ACTUAL VIOLENCE, OR ANY INDICATION THAT YOUR ***IDENTITY*** HAS BEEN ***COMPROMISED.***

HE HAS ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD.

SO MANY PEOPLE.

HOW MUCH HAS THE ***WAYNE/SIMMS FOUNDATION*** PAID OUT IN INJURY AND PROPERTY DAMAGE CLAIMS THIS YEAR? ONE HUNDRED MILLION? TWO HUNDRED MILLION?

FOUR HUNDRED AND FORTY-EIGHT MILLION DOLLARS SO FAR, SIR... NOT ACCOUNTING FOR THE MOST RECENT EVENTS, OF COURSE.

FILE 811 SIMTEK INDUSTRIES

THREAT LEVEL 9.88

SIMMS

FILE 1855

FILE

FILE

JOKER

PROTOCOL 28:31:07

HUNDREDS OF LIVES ***UPENDED*** EITHER DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY BY MY ACTIONS...

...AND NOW THOUSANDS MORE LIVE IN FEAR BECAUSE ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST DANGEROUS ***PSYCHOPATHS*** KNOWS MY DARKEST SECRET...***AMANDA SIMMS*** SAID THE CITIZENS OF GOTHAM FEARED ***BATMAN*** MORE THAN THEY FEARED THE ***CRIMINALS*** HE'S SWORN TO PROTECT THEM FROM...

...AND SHE MAY HAVE A POINT.

I BELIEVE YOU ARE BEING TOO HARD ON YOURSELF, MASTER BRUCE.

I MADE AN OATH TO NEVER KILL, ALFRED. BUT THE TRUTH IS PEOPLE ***HAVE DIED***...AND WHETHER INTENTIONAL OR NOT, THOSE DEATHS ARE ***MY*** RESPONSIBILITY.

I DON'T BELIEVE THAT IS ***ENTIRELY*** TRUE, SIR. AND IF YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED IN THE TUNNELS, YOU DID WHAT YOU NEEDED TO DO...FURTHERMORE, I'M NOT SURE ONE COULD CONSIDER THE ***CREATURES*** AMANDA SIMMS MADE TO BE ANYTHING CLOSE TO ***HUMAN.***

STILL, I COULD HAVE DONE MORE. I COULD HAVE FOUND A BETTER WAY. AND...

...I ALMOST ***KILLED*** THE JOKER.

I ***MUST*** WORK HARDER, ALFRED...***TRAIN*** HARDER...DEVELOP BETTER TOOLS AND ***WEAPONS***...BE THE PROTECTOR GOTHAM ***NEEDS.***

IF I MAY SAY SO, SIR, NOT ***ALL*** BATTLES ARE WON WITH ***WEAPONS*** AND BETTER TRAINING.

SOMETIMES WE NEED TO FIGHT NOT WITH HANDS CLENCHED IN ***FISTS,*** BUT WITH HANDS HELD ***OPEN.***

YOUR ***FATHER*** TOLD ME THIS MANY YEARS AGO. IT MAY BE THAT THE PEOPLE OF GOTHAM NEED SOMEONE TO FIGHT FOR THEM ON ***TWO*** FRONTS...

...AND PERHAPS THE MAN THAT LIVES DOWN HERE IN THE CAVE SHOULD HAVE A CHAT WITH THE MAN THAT LIVES IN THE ***HOME*** UPSTAIRS...

...IT IS SOMETIMES GOOD TO REMEMBER THAT ***BATMAN*** ISN'T THOMAS WAYNE'S SON... ***BRUCE*** IS.

PING PING

TO: B
FROM: J

PASSCODE-
HAHA

BRINNNNG
BRINNNNG

HELLOOOO?

OH, HIYA, BATS! IT'S SO GOOD OF YOU TO CALL!

I'VE BEEN FEELING A BIT **GUILTY** THAT WE LEFT THINGS ON SUCH A BAD NOTE. I KINDA FIGURE I OWE YOU AN **EXPLANATION,** YEAH?

SO, A FEW WEEKS AGO I'M AT THE MOVIES AND THE STUPID **DEAD LADY** SHOWS UP. SHE STARTS GOIN' ON AND ON AT ME ABOUT GRABBING **HARLEY** OR WHATEVER TO THE POINT THAT I FEEL MYSELF SLIPPING INTO A **COMA.**

BUT THEN SHE TELLS ME ABOUT THIS **OTHER** THING SHE'S GOT...

...YOU!

SHE STARTS TELLING ME THIS CRAZY STORY ABOUT HOW SHE KNOWS **EVERYTHING** AND HOW WAAAAY BACK WHEN **YOU** RUINED HER **WEDDING**, SHE GOT A LITTLE SCRATCH OF YOUR **SKIN** UNDER HER FINGERNAIL.

THEN SHE TELLS ME SHE **KNOWS** WHO YOU **ARE** AND THAT SHE'S GOT ALL THE **RECEIPTS!** CRAZY, RIGHT?

I MEAN, IMAGINE WHAT SOMEBODY COULD **DO** WITH **INFO** LIKE THAT!

HECK, **YOU'D** BE TOAST, AND **GOTHAM** WOULD BE FREE FOR THE **TAKING!**

ALL I HAD TO DO WAS GO ALONG WITH HER LITTLE **TEAM-UP** JOKE AND **BINGO**, I'D GET A **KEY** TO A **BOX** WITH YOUR WHOLE LIFE STORY IN IT...WHO YOU ARE, WHERE YOU LIVE, YOUR FRIENDS, **EVERYTHING!**

AND YOU KNOW WHAT? SHE **WASN'T** LYING! IT WAS **ALL** IN THERE, JUST LIKE SHE SAID!

NOW, YOU KNOW THAT I HAVE TRUST ISSUES, SO I NEEDED SOME **INSURANCE** THAT I'D GET WHAT I WANTED WITH NO EXTRA BAGGAGE LYING AROUND.

I FIGURED THAT ONCE I GOT THE KEY, **YOU'D** BE SO **PISSED** ABOUT **TRAMPIRELLA** SLICING UP **GORDON** THAT **YOU'D** TAKE HER OUT **FOR** ME!

AND THAT'S WHERE **THESE** GUYS COME IN. BECAUSE FROM HERE, THINGS GET A LITTLE...SLIPPERY.

KA-BOOM

**TWO** BIRDS WITH **ONE STONE!** GOOD CALL ON MY PART, RIGHT? IT ALL WORKED OUT PERFECTLY!

BOOYAH! YOU SNOOZE, YOU LOSE, BATTY BATS! CHECK **THIS** BAD BOY OUT!

WELL, CREEPY LADY **DID** TRY TO HURT BUTTERCUP'S FEELINGS BY MAKING HER THINK SHE **DIDN'T MATTER** TO ME...PLUS I, AH, GOT AN OFFER I COULDN'T REFUSE.

YEAH, I GET THE **ROCK**, AND **HE** GETS TO KEEP HIS "**JEWELS**"! WOOT! WOOT!

AHEM, ANYWAYS...

"REMEMBER WHEN ALL THE SPLASHIN' AND CRASHIN' WAS GOING ON AND ***QUEEN BUZZKILL*** GRABBED YOU? I DON'T KNOW IF YOU HEARD OVER ALL THE RACKET, BUT JUST BEFORE EVERYTHING WENT BLOOEY, SHE TURNS TO ME AND SAYS--"

YOU'RE STAYING WITH ***ME... MISTER--***

"AND THAT'S WHEN I USED YOUR MAGIC GUN.

"YOU SEE, BATS, SHE REALLY ***DID*** KNOW EVERYTHING...

"...LIKE THE ***ONE*** THING I WOULD RISK ***EVERYTHING*** FOR...

"...AND THAT'S ***NEVER*** KNOWING WHO YOU ***REALLY*** ARE. THAT'S WHAT THE REAL DEAL WAS...SHE WAS GONNA GO PUBLIC AND ***OUT YOU*** IF I DIDN'T PLAY ALONG AND 'EARN' THE KEY!"

DESTROYING MY BESTEST FRIEND WAS AMANDA SIMMS'S REVENGE AGAINST ME FOR THE WHOLE WEDDING NONSENSE...AND I'M SORRY, BUT THAT'S JUST NEVER GONNA HAPPEN!

NOW, THESE GUYS' JOB WAS SIMPLE: BUST INTO THE BANK, VERIFY WHAT WAS IN THE BOX, AND DESTROY IT WITHOUT TELLING ME YOUR IDENTITY...

BUT AGAIN--HOLD ON, LET ME BACK AWAY HERE JUST A BIT--I HAVE TRUST ISSUES, SO--

KA-BOOM!

KABOOOM

PRESTO, PROBLEM SOLVED! LET'S FACE IT, BATS, YOU AND ME ARE THE APEX OF APEX PREDATORS! WE GOT NO PEERS!

WHAT I'M TRYING TO SAY, OLD CHUM, IS THAT YOU MAKE LIFE WORTH LIVING! YOU'RE THE PEANUT BUTTER TO MY CHOCOLATE. WITH NO YOU, THERE'S NO ME...AND WHERE'S THE FUN IN THAT? SOMEBODY CROSSED THE LINE AND TRIED TO TAKE YOU FROM ME, BATS...

...AND LIKE I TOLD YOU AT THE BEGINNING... NOBODY TAKES WHAT'S MINE.

C'MON, PICKLE PIE, LET'S GET TO SOME HONEY-MOONIN'!

NOW, DON'T BE JEALOUS, BATS...

PAT PAT

...YOU KNOW YOU'LL ALWAYS BE MY NUMBER ONE.

BE SEEIN' YA.

AS YOU ALL KNOW, THE PURPOSE OF THE ***WAYNE/SIMMS FOUNDATION*** WAS TO CARE FOR THOSE DISPLACED, INJURED, OR HAVING LOST LOVED ONES DUE TO THE ACTIONS OF ***LAW ENFORCEMENT,*** AS WELL AS ***THE BATMAN*** IN GOTHAM'S WAR ON CRIME...

...NAMED FOR MY PARENTS, THE NEWLY FORMED ***THOMAS AND MARTHA WAYNE FOUNDATION*** WILL TAKE THOSE CORE PRINCIPLES AND EXPAND ON THEM WITH NEW AND EXCITING INITIATIVES.

WITH UNPRECEDENTED COOPERATION BETWEEN LOCAL AND STATE LAW ENFORCEMENT, AS WELL AS THE MAYOR'S OFFICE AND BATMAN HIMSELF, A NEW ERA OF ***POLICE REFORM*** AND ***ACCOUNTABILITY*** FOR WHAT THE PRESS REFERS TO AS THE "MASK VIGILANTE EPIDEMIC" IS UPON US.

ALREADY WE'VE SEEN THE RESULTS OF SUCH COOPERATION IN THE INVESTIGATION INTO SIMTEK. INFORMATION SHARED BETWEEN BATMAN AND POLICE PAVED THE WAY FOR JUSTICE TO BE SERVED AS WELL AS RESTITUTION AND CLOSURE FOR THE FAMILIES AFFECTED BY SIMTEK AND ***DONALD SIMMS'S*** MISCONDUCT.

TOGETHER WE CAN

TOGETHER WE CAN

BUT OF ALL THE INITIATIVES, THE ONE I'M MOST ***PROUD*** OF IS AIMED AT FINDING NEW HOMES FOR ***CHILDREN*** THAT HAVE LOST THEIR PARENTS TO VIOLENCE OR HAVE SUFFERED ABUSE.

ALONG WITH FINDING NEW HOMES, THE FOUNDATION WILL PROVIDE FINANCIAL AID TOWARD EACH CHILD'S EDUCATION AS WELL AS FULL ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH CARE FOR AS LONG AS IS NEEDED.

AND FINALLY, LET ME INTRODUCE YOU TO OUR NEWEST BOARD MEMBERS...***DR. CARL WEIR, BARBARA GORDON,*** AND HER FATHER, ***COMMISSIONER JAMES GORDON.***

WE LOOK FORWARD TO THE INVALUABLE INSIGHT THEY'LL BRING TO THE FOUNDATION'S COMMITMENT TO THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF ***ALL*** OF GOTHAM'S CITIZENS.

THAT WAS A VERY IMPRESSIVE SPEECH, WAYNE.

THANKS, ***PETER,*** SO I CAN COUNT ON THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE FOR SUPPORT?

CAN I COUNT ON ***YOUR*** SUPPORT FOR MY ***REELECTION?***

AH, I SEE. YOU KNOW, PETE, MAYBE I SHOULD RUN FOR GOVERNOR MYSELF.

***HA HA!*** ALWAYS THE KIDDER.

YOU ***ARE*** KIDDING... RIGHT?

SORRY TO INTERRUPT, MASTER BRUCE, BUT I'D LIKE TO INTRODUCE YOU TO SOME TRULY WONDERFUL PEOPLE. THIS IS SHEILA AND ROBERT MICHAELS AND THEIR NEWLY ***ADOPTED*** SON, ***THOMAS.***

IF YOU RECALL, THOMAS IS THE YOUNG LAD WHO LOST HIS PARENTS IN THAT DREADFUL ***FACTORY ACCIDENT.***

WE JUST WANTED TO SAY HELLO AND THANK YOU FOR HELPING US BRING THOMAS INTO OUR HOME, MR. WAYNE.

YOU'RE VERY WELCOME. I'M GLAD I WAS ABLE TO HELP. AND PLEASE, CALL ME BRUCE.

IT'S NICE TO MEET YOU, THOMAS.

DO YOU REALLY KNOW ***BATMAN?***

WHY YES, I DO.

WOW, THAT'S SO ***COOL!***

NEXT TIME YOU SEE HIM, CAN YOU GIVE HIM THIS?

I CERTAINLY WILL...

...MAYBE SOMEDAY YOU'LL GET TO MEET HIM.

FOR YEARS I WOULD GO TO MY PARENTS' GRAVE SITE TO SIT IN MY PAIN AND FEEL THE RAGE OF THEIR LOSS...

...I WOULD DWELL ON MY ANGER AND REMIND MYSELF OF MY PURPOSE...OF WHY I BECAME ***THE BATMAN***...

...TOMORROW WOULD HAVE BEEN THEIR FORTIETH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY...

TO BATMAN

THE GREATEST HERO EVER!

YES, **MR. WAYNE**, GO OFF INTO THE NIGHT. SEEK THE CLUES AND FIND THE EVIDENCE...BE THE **WORLD'S GREATEST DETECTIVE.**

CAPTURE YOUR CRIMINALS, WRAP THEM UP, AND **DELIVER** THEM TO A **CORRUPT** SYSTEM OF **JUSTICE** WHERE "INNOCENCE" CAN BE BOUGHT AS ONE MIGHT BUY A PAIR OF SHOES...

...HANDS CLENCHED IN FISTS...AND HANDS HELD OPEN.

GOTHAM IS MY FAMILY NOW, AND I WILL **PROTECT** IT AS **FIERCELY** AND **COMPASSIONATELY** AS MY MOTHER AND FATHER **PROTECTED** ME. I WILL FOREVER FIGHT FOR THIS CITY, BOTH AS **BATMAN AND** AS **BRUCE WAYNE...**

SOME WOULD SAY THAT GOTHAM LIVES IN CONSTANT SHADOW, AND THAT EVIL IS CARVED IN EVERY BRICK. BUT IT IS NOT THE DARK SOULS OF THOSE I FIGHT AGAINST THAT DEFINE THIS CITY--IT IS DEFINED BY THE BRIGHT, BEATING HEARTS OF ITS GOOD PEOPLE.

I AM THOMAS AND MARTHA WAYNE'S SON, BUT I AM ALSO THE SON OF **GOTHAM,** AND I WILL HONOR IT AND CELEBRATE IT AS I WOULD THEM.

ALFRED AND I ARE GOING TO VISIT THEM AND CELEBRATE THEM...TO LET THEM KNOW THAT THEY ARE LOVED...

...AND THAT THEY ARE MISSED.

...AND I WILL DELIVER **JUSTICE** IN MY **OWN** WAY.

YOU **SEEK** THE TRUTH, MR. WAYNE...

...I **KNOW** THE TRUTH.

...I KNOW WHAT THEY **DID,** AND HOW THEY **FELT** WHEN THEY DID IT.

REST ASSURED THAT WHEN THE **GUILTY** YOU DELIVER TO THE COURTS ARE SET **FREE,** I WILL BE THERE TO **GREET** THEM.

IN AN ODD WAY, THAT PUTS US ON THE SAME TEAM. I'M SURE EVEN **THE JOKER** WOULD FIND THAT AMUSING.

I SOUGHT TO **BREAK** YOU, MR. WAYNE. TO TAKE FROM YOU ALL THAT YOU HAD TAKEN FROM ME. I STRUCK YOU WHERE YOU WERE THE MOST **VULNERABLE**...YOUR SENSE OF **SELF,** WHO YOU **REALLY** ARE UNDER THE **MASK** AND **HUBRIS** THAT GIVE YOU YOUR POWER...

...TO MAKE YOU **DOUBT** YOURSELF...TO SHOW YOU THAT YOU WEREN'T ABOVE **DEFEAT**... THAT BENEATH ALL THE TRAINING AND THE TOOLS AND THE WEALTH, YOU WERE, IN REALITY, JUST A MAN. NOTHING MORE.

AND THEN SOMETHING HAPPENED...I SCRATCHED YOUR FACE WHEN WE FOUGHT IN THE TUNNELS.

WHAT I LEARNED FROM THAT SCRATCH WAS THAT YOU FELT A PROFOUND ***REMORSE***...A REMORSE FOR MY ***CHILDREN*** AND THEIR LIVES THAT YOU TOOK. AND THAT HAS ***MEANING***.

I WAS IN ATTENDANCE WHEN YOU GAVE YOUR SPEECH. YOU MADE MANY PROMISES TO THE ***GOOD*** PEOPLE OF ***GOTHAM***. MAKE SURE YOU KEEP THEM... BECAUSE I'LL BE WATCHING.

FOR NOW, YOU ARE FREE TO GO ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS, MR. WAYNE. IN ***THIS*** GOTHAM THERE IS ROOM FOR US ***BOTH***, SO FOR THE MOMENT, YOUR ***SECRET*** IS ***SAFE***--I WILL DEAL WITH ***THE JOKER*** IN ANOTHER WAY.

BUT MAKE NO MISTAKE, ***MY*** GOTHAM IS COMING...

...AND WHETHER THERE IS ***ROOM*** FOR YOU THEN WILL BE UP TO ***YOU***.

AND IF YOU THINK YOU CAN STOP ME, REMEMBER...

...WHAT ***KILLS*** ME...

...MAKES ME ***STRONGER***.

# CHAPTER SEVEN

# THE END

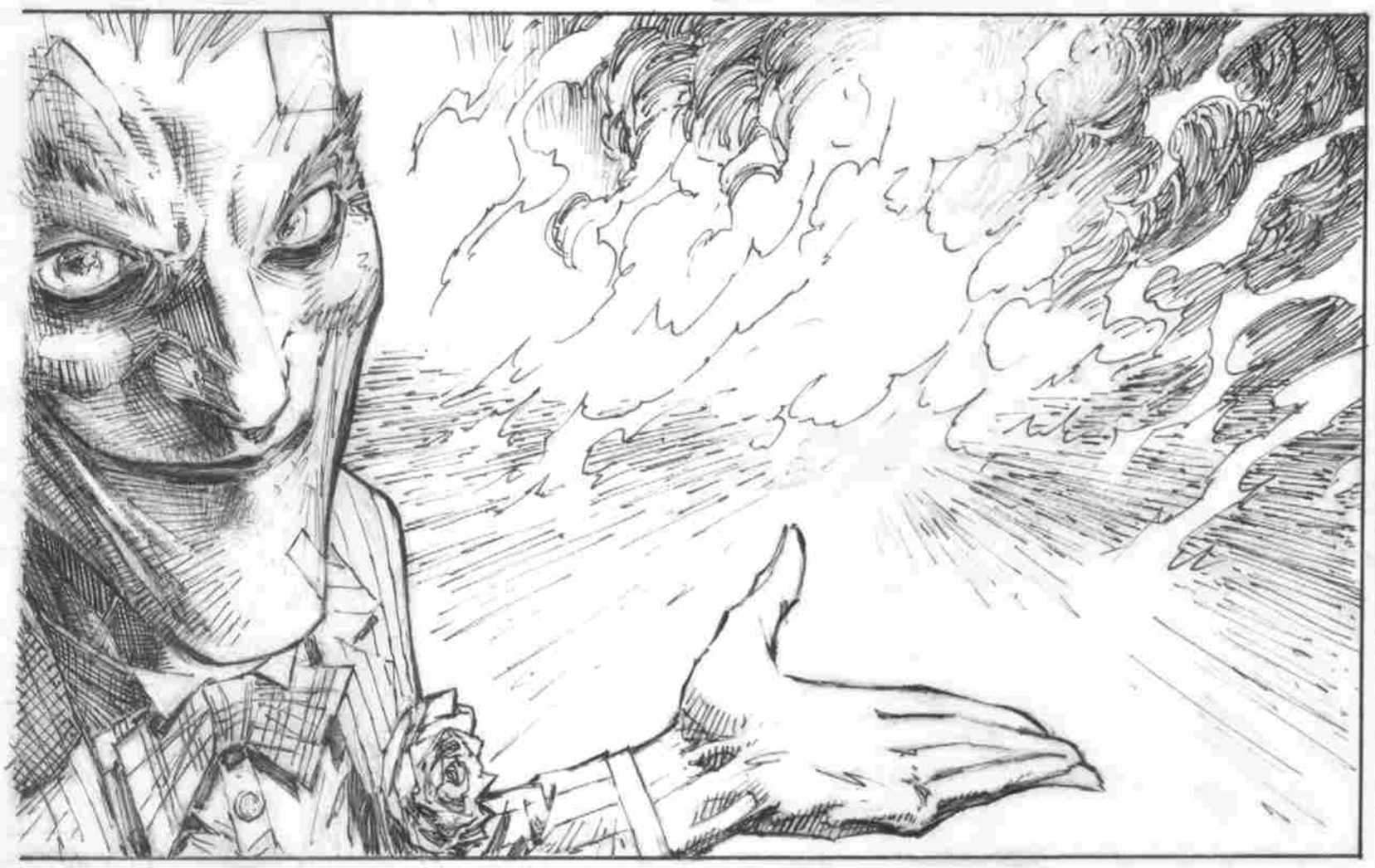
INKED PAGES BY

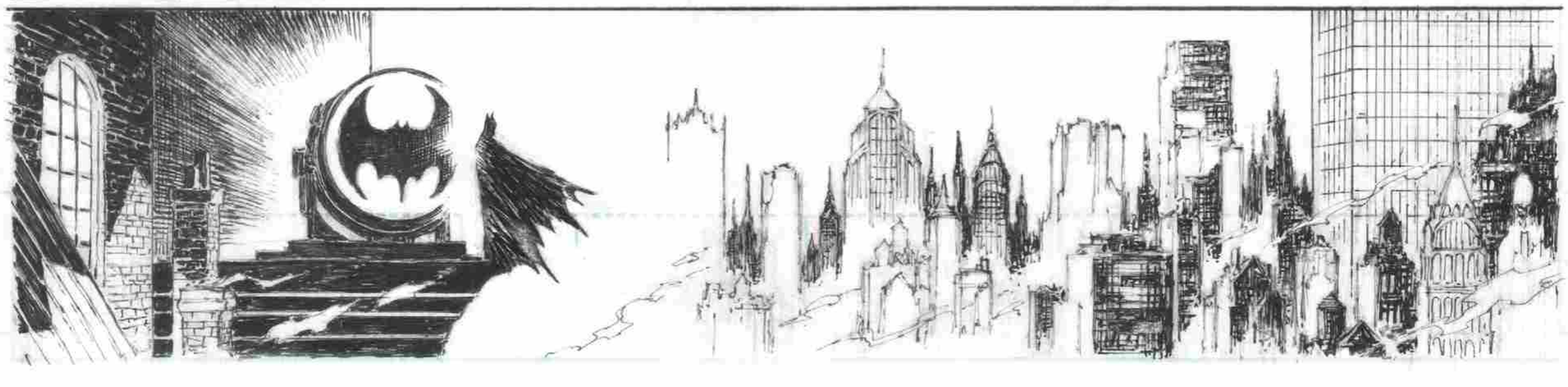
# MARC SILVESTRI

WAAA
WAAA

BATMAN / JOKER 7 12

KA-BOOM!





# BATMAN & THE JOKER
# THE DEADLY DUO

DAWN OF DC

AAPI HERITAGE MONTH

TRAVEL BETWEEN THE LANDS OF THE LIVING AND THE DEAD!

# SPIRIT WORLD

© & ™ DC

WRITTEN BY
**ALYSSA WONG**
**王秀莲**

ART AND COVER BY
**HAINING**
**海凝**

WE ARE LEGENDS
千古傳奇 우린 전설이다 私たちは伝説だ हम है सिकंदर

DAWN OF DC EXPANDS WITH ALL-NEW SERIES STARRING LEGENDARY ASIAN HEROES!

6-ISSUE SERIES DEBUTING IN MAY

COVER
MARC SILVESTRI & ARIF PRIANTO

BATMAN/JOKER & JOKER/BATMAN VARIANT COVERS
SIMON BISLEY

VARIANT COVERS
MIKE MIGNOLA & DAVE STEWART
JOCK

1:25 VARIANT COVER
JONBOY MEYERS

1:50 VARIANT COVER
MARC SILVESTRI

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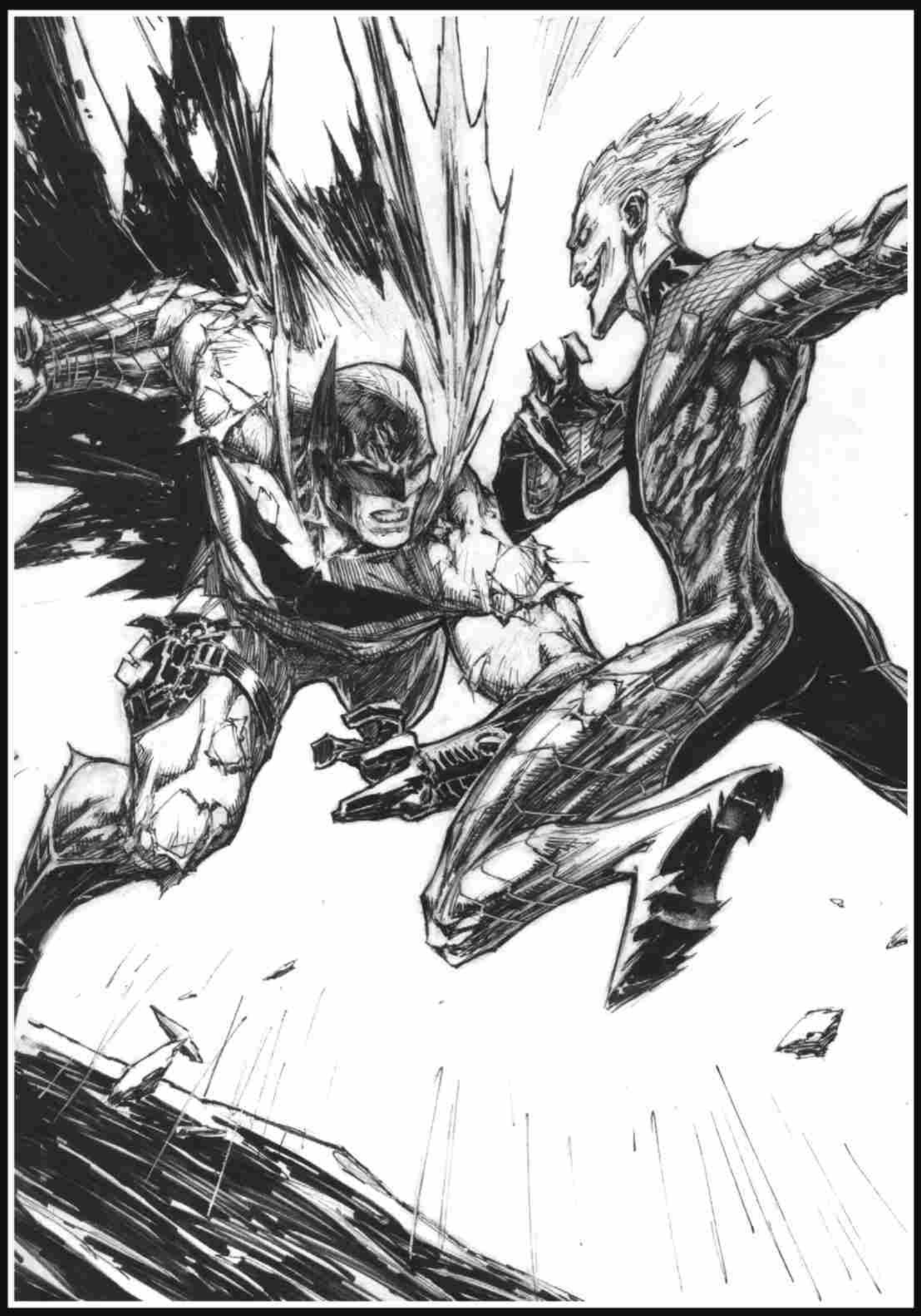

"I WAS STARTING TO WORRY THIS WHOLE TEAM-UP JOKE WASN'T GONNA HAVE A PUNCHLINE!"

-THE JOKER

The Last Kryptonian-DCP